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Slavery



A LETTER

TO THE

MARQUIS OF CHANDOS.

1831.

MERCHANT, PRINTER, INGRAM-COURT, FENCHURCH-STREET

TO THE

MARQUIS OF CHANDOS.

MY LORD,

IN times like the present, when innovation and revolution are the stepping-stones to popularity ;—when vested rights are sacrificed at the shrine of reckless ambition ;—when changes are miscalled improvement, and their proposers men of talent ;—and when Englishmen are treated as if guilty of corrupt practices without the sacred and solemn ordeal of Trial by Jury ;—it behoves every man to raise his voice in support of justice, and to oppose the theories and wild doctrines of a ministry, which it has pleased Providence to inflict upon our once happy country.

My mind has been led into this train of reflection by a conversation with an intelligent and honest man, who has been conversant and connected with our West-India colonies during the last thirty years. His property is in ships, and he has no direct interest in slaves or plantations. Astounded by the assertions set forth by “The Saints” and by their dupes and agents, I put to his honour and integrity to answer, truly, the following questions:—

Q. How would you describe the state and condition of the slave-population in the West-India colonies?

A. As the happiest amongst the labouring classes in the world.

Q. Specify their advantages?

A. 1st, Light labour.

2d, A supply to profusion of the necessities of life.

3d, Fostered and watched over in infancy, sickness, and old age.

4th, By the laws of the colonies protected against separation from their families.

5th, The governors and authorities of the different islands being in duty

bound to listen to their complaints and to afford redress.

6th, The means they possess of realizing property for their own exclusive benefit, by the sale of pigs, poultry, and other marketable commodities. In many cases, the proprietors are purchasers at market-value when there is no demand in the market.

Q. What do you consider to be their natural character ?

A. Prone to idleness and “ given to sensuality,” but cheerful, merry, and contented. On every Saturday night they indulge in the pastime of dancing—and such dancing as cheers the heart and evinces the absence of care, anxiety, and grief. In many of their habitations I have been invited to take a glass of wine.

Q. Were they emancipated, what proportion of them would continue to cultivate the soil as free labourers ?

A. *Not one in thirty* : as a corroboration of the above, one of the laws enacted in the whole of the colonies is :—“ That no proprietor shall be at liberty to emancipate a slave, without giving se-

curity that he do not become chargeable to the public ;” and, further, it is my opinion that, were they relieved from their present obligation to perform *light labour*, they would not even have the industry to cultivate their provision-ground, and that the mortality from famine would speedily realize, to a frightful extent, the mortality which is falsely stated to be the consequence of their present state : vide Sierra Leone and Free Labour.

Q. Are corporal punishments frequent, and are they ever inflicted upon females ?

A. Corporal punishments are of rare occurrence amongst the males, and I have not heard of or witnessed the infliction of any corporal punishment upon any female during the last twenty years !!

Q. Suppose there were to be a weekly court held by a government magistrate, unconnected with slaves or slave property, to award punishment or dismiss complaint, would such an arrangement better the condition, or add to the happiness of the slave ?

A. By no means. The complaints which are brought before the managers are

mostly from one negro against another ; for instance, one man allows his pig to damage his neighbour's garden ; another pilfers his rum, &c. &c. Punishments for neglect of work are few in number in the catalogue of punishments ; indeed, I know one plantation where the usual punishment was a badge of disgrace, not unlike that which is worn by Greenwich and Chelsea pensioners, as a punishment for drunkenness or irregular conduct.

Q. Do you believe the state of slavery to be productive of crime ?

A. In the West Indies—*certainly not*. In London, and in England generally, the abuses of power, acts of theft, robbery, murder, and sickening cruelty are as a hundred to one. Let any unprejudiced person read the police-reports of the Metropolis, of Sheffield, and Manchester, or the cruelties of that monster of a woman Hibbard, and then let him refer to the colonial prints !! Let him read and mark the difference, and then turn with disgust from the vile calumniators of the much-injured West-India proprietor. And now, my Lord, let us

turn to the agitators and principal movers in this all-exciting question. Let us consider those “Saints” who extort from the weaknesses, ignorance, and enthusiasm of the lower orders, hundreds of thousands of pounds, which they distribute amongst the thorough-paced hypocrite, whose trade is falsehood; too idle to gain a livelihood by honest means, he works upon the morbid sensibility of (mostly) the weaker sex, and disseminates, as facts, assertions which the Master Saints know are “false as Hell!”

To many poor persons they present themselves, and ask “if they wish to see their “children torn from them and loaded with “chains?” presenting, at the same time, a most diabolical illustration of cruelties said to be practised on the slave, and upon their shrinking from such a fate befalling their own offspring; they then say, “then sign this petition.”

Upon one occasion, of which proof is at hand, two sainted delegates took up their abode in one parish, collected £32 : 8 : 6, and, in the meanwhile, the bill at the inn amounted to £31 some odd money, for din-

ners, wine, post-horses, &c., thus plundering the poor of the parish and neighbourhood of £32, while only a few shillings were reserved for their charitable and holy object.

Look, my Lord, at Sierra Leone. The amount of contracts; the state of morality; the produce of free-labour; and the mortality amongst Europeans; then, my Lord, turn to the conduct of Government and the profits of the sainted Mac Cauleys. Look, too, my Lord, at the splendid fortune of Fowell Buxton, the amount “derived from the sale of slaves.” Ask him how much interest he derives from Irish mortgages? How much is returned in charity to the degraded labourers of the soil, and how he feels, when uttering one of his elaborate graces over his splendid banquets, being at the moment aware that the widow and orphan of the poor West Indian are reduced to want, starvation, and misery, by the promulgation of foul and false calumnies. But the voice of the widow and orphan will not be lifted up in vain, and the day of retribution may not be far off. Then, too, my Lord, where was the great Doctor of Laws at the meeting for the relief of the starving Irish!!! What, Doctor, was there no client

to be gained by a display of oratory at the Exeter-Hall upon that occasion? Did you believe that your presence there might take a few pounds from your enormous income in DEFENDING the *injured* and OPPRESSED? Were you diffident, in your own knowledge, as to the actual state of the Irish peasantry; you, who are so well acquainted with the hapless condition of the injured negro? Shame is it upon the common sense, and naturally good and generous feelings of the British Nation, to be led into the path of injustice and cruelty by such agents. It is to be hoped that better days are dawning upon us, and that such a Reform will take place as shall deprive political and popular *traders* of their baleful influence. What man can reflect, without unutterable disgust, upon a speech delivered at “the popular Yorkshire Election,” when the aim of the Orator was to minister to the vanities and passions of the multitude, at the expense of every thing sacred and most to be revered in this country.

A short time elapses, when the said Orator declares his independence of *all* parties, and within *a few hours*, and in the face of this declaration, stoops to become a member of

that very aristocracy which he sought to bring into hatred and contempt. From such men, and from such baseness, well may every Englishman exclaim, “ the Lord deliver us!!!”

But what, my Lord, the oppressed and calumniated West Indian has most to complain of, is the utter weakness and incapability of Government!! *If there be* abuses to be redressed, where is the Government? Why not examine the Governors of the Islands at the bar of the House of Commons? Why not appoint a Commission to report upon the state of the Colonies, and if the Commission decide that the present proprietors are to lose their property, let it be at the expense of the nation. Let not a British Government lend themselves to the spoliation of the helpless and unprotected! Why, my Lord, does not some talented member of the high and honourable class of old English gentlemen, move for the tenures of the different absentee proprietors in famishing Ireland, and compare them with the tenures by which property is held in the Colonies? Why, too, my Lord, are not the returns of rent from these estates moved for, and then let it be shewn, which

class of proprietors contribute most largely to the support of the labourers of the soil?

Since the political economists have been in the ascendant, many West-India estates lost for successive years one-third *more* than the value of their produce for the support of their labouring population; while the Irish absentee landlords (amongst whom may be included the *Honorable* member for Northamptonshire,) are abstracting from the starving peasantry of Ireland thousands and thousands per annum! Then, my Lord, examine their titles. The West Indian in almost every case will be found to have *purchased* his property under severe laws and *enactments*, while the *Honorable* and absentee gentlemen have mostly obtained their grants from arbitrary monarchs, and in times of confiscation.

I must beg pardon of all those who devote a few minutes to the perusal of the foregoing statement.

A sense of wrong, dishonesty, and falsehood has stimulated to an expression of my sentiments, and I can only hope that a cause so just, involving a question of safety to property, and a question of national greatness, will be speedily taken up and

advocated by a more talented individual. I am aware that there are those, amongst the modern school, who declare all Colonies to be a *tax* on the mother country.

Hence, Ireland, at least the starving portion of it, ought to be dissevered from the mother country.

The poor kelp-growers of Scotland, who interfere with the barilla speculations of the house, in which the Honorable Member for Dover *once* had an interest, should share the same fate, as should Gibraltar, Malta, &c. &c. &c. The unshaken loyalty, the devoted patriotism of our western possessions give them a claim to better treatment.

In their seas and neighbourhood the British Flag has gained many of its most splendid triumphs.

With their history are identified the names of a St. Vincent, a Nelson and a Collingwood. Sad and mournful would be the dawn which should break upon a foreign flag, waving over ramparts, bearing the records of British valour and the stamp of British greatness and British dominion. But, of a choice of evils, this latter would be the least: if the ministry are not in public confidence or ability equal to the govern-

ment of the Colonies, they are bound to relieve them from their allegiance.

The “tyranny of the Saints” is indeed no longer to be borne with.

Before concluding, I may advert to the fact, that the Exports to our West-India Colonies have diminished, within these few years, to the amount of two or three millions; thus diminishing to the home manufacturer the demand for labour, throwing a number of seamen out of employ, and lessening the supply of comforts and necessities to the negro-population. Then, my Lord, allow me to call your attention to the picture of happiness, described in such glowing and animated language by Messrs. Bailey and Coleridge, in their works on the West Indies, upon all occasions when the negroes assemble together, either proceeding to work, to market, or to scenes of festivity! Contrast this with the degraded and sorrowful condition of the English pauper!! It happened to myself to be passing over an estate belonging to one of the honorable, liberal, and enlightened members for the county of York, upon one of the worst days of November, and to find (breaking stones upon the road) a miserable old pauper,

worn out in constitution, broken down in spirit, who stated his age to be eighty, and who was appointed by the parish overseers thus to earn *eight-pence* per day!!! This, my Lord, is not a singular case;—let any one attend parish and vestry meetings, and then, if he dare, hesitate to say who are mostly the objects of pity, the free-born Englishman or the West-India negro? But such sickening facts never obtrude themselves upon the delicate sensibilities of the Saints.

While starvation and famine are carrying on their devastations in the Sister Island, the London public are amused by long accounts of “the beef steaks” cooked in “the stoke-hole” of Fowell Buxton’s brewery, for the entertainment of the King’s Ministers. There is yet another awful and appalling result, not unlikely to flow from the state of excitement produced by the saintly incendiaries;—it is a rehearsal of the tragedy of St. Domingo. Human nature shrinks from the appalling contemplation; but human experience *confirms* the probability of such a consummation to their saintly labours. That the Colonists have a paramount interest in the improvement of the black population, no man but “a Saint” will affect to enter-

tain a doubt. The higher their attainments as a moral, religious, and industrious people, the greater the security of property, and the less the danger of violent change or convulsion. But surely they ought to be governed according to their actual condition, with a view to their gradual improvement. Planters are, at all times, willing to give facility to their slaves receiving religious instruction; and habits of industry are most effectually promoted amongst them by *their power of realizing property for their own use and benefit*. In short, they are a happy and contented race; and heavy will be the responsibility of that Government, who shall sacrifice life and property at the instigation of interested quacks, or, at least, of misguided enthusiasts.

I have the honour to be,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's

Most obedient humble servant,

A PROPRIETOR OF WEST-INDIA PROPERTY
BY INHERITANCE.

London, 1st July, 1831.



